

But the second thing it proves is that it is utterly foolish for people to be diverted or distracted from the urgent challenges still before us. I told you that we had a record—a record low in African-American unemployment and poverty; a record low in the poverty rate for children, of African-American children. Do you know what that record low is? It's about 39 percent. In other words, it's breathtakingly high. That's just one statistic.

So what does that tell me? It tells me that the right thing to do is, if we all put progress over partisanship, put people over politics, put the American people first—what would we do? Well, we would keep the budget balanced. We would save Social Security before we squandered the surplus. We would improve our schools. We would clean up our environment. We would pass the Patients' Bill of Rights. And we would keep the economy going. That's what we would be focused on. That's what I am focused on. That's the way out.

The way out here—and the only way out is for people in Washington to do what the folks in America want them to do, which is to take care of their concerns, their children, and their future. That's what I mean to do, and I'm going to do my best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Monique Miskimon, administrative assistant, Maryland Committee for Children, Inc., who introduced the President, and her daughter, Jessica; and State Senator Efrain Gonzalez, Jr., of New York, president, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators.

### **Statement on the Census Bureau Report on Income and Poverty**

*September 24, 1998*

This morning, the Census Bureau released its annual report on income and poverty. The report shows that our growing economy continues to raise incomes, lift millions out of poverty, and extend opportunity. It represents further evidence that we must maintain fiscal responsibility, investments in our people, and our global leadership on matters of finance and trade.

Last year the income of the typical American household grew by nearly twice the rate of inflation. Since we launched our economic plan in 1993, the typical family's income has risen by more than \$3,500. The overall poverty rate fell to 13.3 percent. And while there is clearly more to be done, the African-American poverty rate fell to another record low; Hispanic poverty saw the largest one-year drop in two decades. Child poverty has dropped more in the past 4 years than any 4-year period in nearly 30 years; and the earned-income tax credit, which we have dramatically expanded and fought hard to preserve, raised more than 4 million people out of poverty last year.

All Americans have a right to be proud of these gains. But we can't let these good times lull us into complacency. We must work even harder to make sure that as our Nation races forward, we give everyone a chance to come along.

### **Statement on the Anniversaries of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Limited Test Ban Treaty**

*September 24, 1998*

Two years ago today, I was proud to be the first world leader to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—first proposed by President Eisenhower over 40 years ago. Since then, 150 states have signed this historic treaty, including all of our NATO allies, Russia, China, Israel, Japan, and South Korea. Twenty states already have ratified the CTBT, including Britain, France, Germany, Australia, and Brazil. It is my strong hope that India and Pakistan will join the list and thereby reduce nuclear tensions in South Asia. I discussed this with Prime Minister Sharif on Monday, and I welcome his commitment yesterday to adhere to the treaty by next fall. I look forward to further discussion with the leaders of Pakistan and India as we emphasize our common obligation to build peace and stability.

Today also marks the 35th anniversary of the Senate bipartisan vote, 80–19, to approve the Limited Test Ban Treaty, which President Kennedy considered his greatest accomplishment as President. In 1963, Senate

approval of the LTBT took place less than 2 months after it was signed and within 7 weeks of its submission to the Senate. Contrast that with the CTBT. A year after it was submitted, the Senate has yet to take any action toward ratification.

The CTBT will ban all nuclear weapons explosions. As a result, it will constrain the development of more sophisticated and powerful nuclear weapons and give us a powerful new tool in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The American people understand that Senate approval of the CTBT is the right thing to do. I strongly urge the Senate to give its advice and consent as early as possible next year.

NOTE: In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Naraz Sharif of Pakistan.

### **Statement on House Action on Temporary Visas for Highly Skilled Immigrants**

*September 24, 1998*

I am pleased that the House of Representatives has moved quickly to pass a bipartisan compromise to address a shortage of skilled workers, while providing new training and protections for U.S. workers. To address that shortage and maintain America's competitive edge, we must give U.S. workers new opportunities to train and to learn new skills. This legislation helps us meet that challenge by providing up to \$250 million over 3 years in new funding to educate and train Americans for the jobs of the future.

This compromise institutes new reforms to ensure that employers do not replace U.S. workers with temporary foreign workers and requires employers to recruit U.S. workers. In short, it contains new investments in training, tougher enforcement, and new protections for U.S. workers. I look forward to Congress sending me a bill that is consistent with our bipartisan agreement.

### **Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception**

*September 24, 1998*

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I don't know if you can feel it, but I'm even happier to see you than you are to be here. *[Laughter]* I want to say—you remember that famous quote attributed to Harry Truman, "If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog?" *[Laughter]* Well, I got a dog, and I love him very much, but I'm glad to have you in the White House here tonight. I feel that I have friends here.

I want to thank all the previous speakers. I thank Maria Echaveste and John Podesta for the magnificent work they do for you and the American people every day. I thank Steve Grossman and Roy Romer for taking over our party at what was a financially perilous time, bringing us back to health, and helping to set up the organization, the structure, and the effort that has led to this incredibly talented and diverse array of people being here tonight representing the Democratic Party from every corner of our land.

I want to thank the Vice President. I've said this many times—the historians may argue about whether they agree with what I have done or not—there is one fact about our administration that is absolutely beyond any historical argument. The Vice President of the United States has had more influence over more decisions in more areas of our life and done more good by far than any person who has ever held that position in the history of the United States.

I want to thank Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston for being here and for being a stalwart supporter of our programs and initiatives. She's a great leader. I, too, join in thanking John Sweeney and all the members of the labor movement who are here for the incredible energy and direction and drive they have given to their movement and to our country.

I know we have a number of mayors here: I think Mayor Hammer from San Jose and Mayor Pastrick from East Chicago are here.